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OFFICE OF  
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

## MEMORANDUM

*The Outlook for Hashemite Rule in Jordan*

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**Secret**

5 April 1971

# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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### MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Outlook for Hashemite Rule in Jordan\*

1. The fedayeen challenge to King Hussein reached the point last September where his writ hardly extended beyond the palace walls. Never having really accepted the Hashemite Monarchy, many Palestinians looked forward to its downfall, and to the most militant nationalists among them this seemed almost in sight. The antagonism of Palestinians toward the Monarchy derives strength from two emotional attitudes -- resentment that the Hashemite regime was imposed upon them by outsiders and fear that it might make a deal with the Israelis at their expense.

2. The fedayeen campaign produced a critical situation for several weeks last fall. But that challenge failed and the

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\* This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated within CIA.

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smashing defeat which the Jordanian Army administered, and its constant pressure on the fedayeen since, has put the Hashemite throne in its solidest position for many years. Hussein has installed a government dominated by East Bank conservatives and backed by the Army establishment who support his policy of maintaining control over the fedayeen. His most important opponents are cowed and fragmented, and the larger number who dislike the regime, but whose disapproval has been more passive, have lapsed into their customary frustrated acquiescence.

3. The King's authority has not only been reasserted and prospects for the continuation of his rule improved but he has, for the first time, a credible successor. In the months since the September showdown his brother, Crown Prince Hasan, has shown more and more promise. Hasan appears mature beyond his 23 years. He seems more ready to employ force than his brother Hussein, although this may derive from his somewhat simplistic view of affairs and comparative inexperience in dealing with the Jordanian scene. When the King was absent from the country late in 1970, Hasan, as regent, in cooperation with Prime Minister Wasfi Tal continued the planned campaign against the fedayeen, keeping Hussein informed. The Crown Prince grew in experience, and respect

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for him in the Army -- which has cultivated him assiduously -- and the East Bank establishment was enhanced.

4. Should something happen to the King in the near future Hasan would probably succeed with minimal disruption. Hasan is intelligent and better educated (he graduated with a degree in Political Science from Oxford) than the King. He does not have the King's charisma, however, nor his sophistication. He has had the experience of ruling in the King's absence; he has the Army in back of him and support within the Jordanian establishment. His youth might be a disadvantage; although Hussein succeeded to the throne in 1952 at the age of 17. He would probably find it more difficult than Hussein, for a time at least, to obtain the external financial support on which Jordan depends. While Hasan's experience in ruling nowhere matches that of the King, he in time might well become as good or better ruler for Jordan.

5. While many Palestinians expressed bitter resentment during the Army's bloody suppression of the fedayeen last September, in the past several months there has been a reconsideration. A sizable number of the Palestinian middle class living on the East Bank are a part of the Jordanian

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"establishment" and never did support the fedayeen; others have recently come to see their interests threatened by the fedayeen's rampaging. Many Palestinians on both sides of the Jordan River, apparently decided after the September fighting that their desire for law and order outweighed their sense of Palestinian nationalism -- at least as it was exemplified by the atrocity-prone fedayeen. Also, inhabitants of the refugee camps are reported to have become fed up with the firefights between Jordan security forces and fedayeen in the camps. Many Palestinian intellectuals had never really agreed with those extremist fedayeen elements who favored a takeover of the Jordanian regime. The goal was not change in Jordan but a free hand against Israel -- better the orderly tyranny of the alien Hashemites than the feckless rule of an irresponsible fedayeen.\*

6. In addition, the realization was spreading among the Palestinians that the fedayeen had not achieved any success in regaining the lost territories, nor had they much prospect of doing so. Even in the refugee camps support for the fedayeen is reported to have dwindled. Many Palestinians have now come to believe that the Jordanian regime has better prospects of

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\* A paraphrase of the old Arabic proverb, "Better the tyranny of the Turks than the justice of the Arabs."

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ending the Israeli occupation of the West Bank than have all the fedayeen exertions. Looking into the future, many Palestinians fear that a separate West Bank Palestinian state would be Israeli-dominated, as well as economically unviable. Thus they see their future as lying in some arrangement with Amman, preferably an arrangement providing considerable autonomy for the West Bank Palestinians. In an important sense, both the Palestinians and the Amman government need each other and each party realizes the fact. Relations between the two never will be cordial, nor fully trusting, but the necessity for a working relationship will tend to dampen their mutual hostilities.

7. Such a community of interests may make it easier over time for Hussein to reach a settlement with the Israelis, as long as he does not appear to "sell out" the West Bankers and gains some arrangement in the Arab part of Jerusalem so that a semblance of Arab sovereignty is maintained. If the prospects for a reassertion of Arab sovereignty over the West Bank seem good, the great majority of Palestinians are likely to side with Hussein against the fedayeen extremists -- or at least remain neutral. Even a significant proportion of the fedayeen probably would settle for a peaceful return to their West Bank homeland.

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8. Changes in Jordan's neighbors' attitudes, especially Syria and Iraq, have eased King Hussein's problems. The ousting of the "doctrinaire" Baathist regime in Damascus by General Asad, began yet another new era in relations between the two countries. Asad has put Syrian-backed fedayeen under wraps, adopted a more pragmatic approach to foreign and domestic affairs, and softened the regime's policy on a possible Arab-Israeli settlement. Relations with Jordan have turned from meddling and incitement to limited cooperation; however, Jordanian resentment for the Syrian invasion last September still rankles. An additional plus for Jordan has been the lack of a Syrian ganging-up with the Iraqi Baathists against Hussein. The reopening of TAPLINE by the Syrians also has helped to normalize relations. The failure of Iraqi troops stationed in Jordan to intervene on the fedayeen side last September and the consequent withdrawal of the troops has greatly eased Hussein's internal security burden. Jordanian troops no longer have to be tied up keeping an eye on the Iraqis, although they still have forces watching the Syrian border. While the Iraqi regime has not appreciably diminished its attacks on the Hashemites, the improved relationship with Damascus and the departure of the Iraqi troops give King Hussein more maneuverability in the Israeli context.

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9. Hussein's relationship with Egypt remains extremely important. Nasser's death gave Hussein more flexibility in dealing with internal problems, especially the Palestinians and fedayeen. Even after the defeat of Egypt in 1967 Nasser remained a hero to most Palestinians and his influence over them was considerable. Egyptian President Sadat's forthcoming position also has made the idea of a negotiated settlement with Israel more acceptable and the cease-fire on the Suez Canal has generally calmed the situation. At the same time, however, the Jordanians harbor fears that Cairo may agree to a separate agreement with Israel, thus undercutting Jordan's limited negotiating position -- a fear that might be justified. An Egyptian settlement with Israel, however, might ease the way for a Jordanian peace with Israel, unless the Israelis decided that, after an agreement with their main enemy, they could be tougher with Jordan.

10. A breakdown of the Jarring mission would take away many of the advantages in Hussein's present position and a resumption of the Egyptian-Israeli "war of attrition" would produce immediate complications. Pressures from the Palestinians in Jordan and from the surrounding Arab states for a resumption of harassment actions against the Israelis would be considerable.

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An upsurge of fedayeen activities against Israel and in Jordan would be inevitable, which would lead to frequent clashes with Jordanian troops. However, the regime in all probability would be able to cope with them.

11. The government of Jordan is faced with severe economic and fiscal problems which could make the regime's position more difficult. The 1967 war caused considerable economic disruptions that have not been overcome and increased the country's dependence on foreign aid. Fedayeen activities and Israeli responses further disrupted economic activity, especially cultivation in the Jordan valley. Initially, these economic effects of the war and fedayeen activities were mitigated by the annual \$105 million Khartoum Subsidy from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (\$40 million each), and Libya (\$25 million), which greatly helped the government's foreign exchange holdings. The withholdings of subsidies by Libya and the interruption of payments by Kuwait have aggravated the government's fiscal position.

12. Government expenditures have risen greatly since 1967; defense expenditures have more than doubled. The budget deficit for 1971 is expected to exceed \$100 million, with no chance of foreign budget support of this magnitude in sight. The Army has increased in strength from a 48,000 pre-1967 figure to about

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58,000 today. King Hussein is faced with the difficult choice of not paying salaries and other government obligations or cutting the Army down in numbers. Yet, the Army is the mainstay of the regime. Any strict austerity program -- e.g., import curtailment or salary deferral -- would arouse the discontent of several segments of the population, such as the military, civil servants, merchants, and urban elements. Covering the deficit by drawing down currency reserves could shake public confidence and lead to a disturbing flight of capital. Deferral of weapons procurement also is politically dangerous and would be likely to undercut Army morale.

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13. The prospects for the Hashemite regime have improved considerably in the past several months. Its future no longer appears to rest so completely on the life or death of Hussein; his brother Hasan apparently has capabilities for the role and the support of the political forces that count, particularly the Army. The ability of the Palestinians, and especially the fedayeen, either to overthrow the regime or effectively sabotage an arrangement with the Israelis would appear minimal over the short term. But Jordan will remain chronically short of money and dependent

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on external sources of financing for the foreseeable future. But the essential nature of Jordan remains -- which is that it is less a viable state than an arrangement accepted because the alternatives look worse to most interested parties in and out of the country.

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